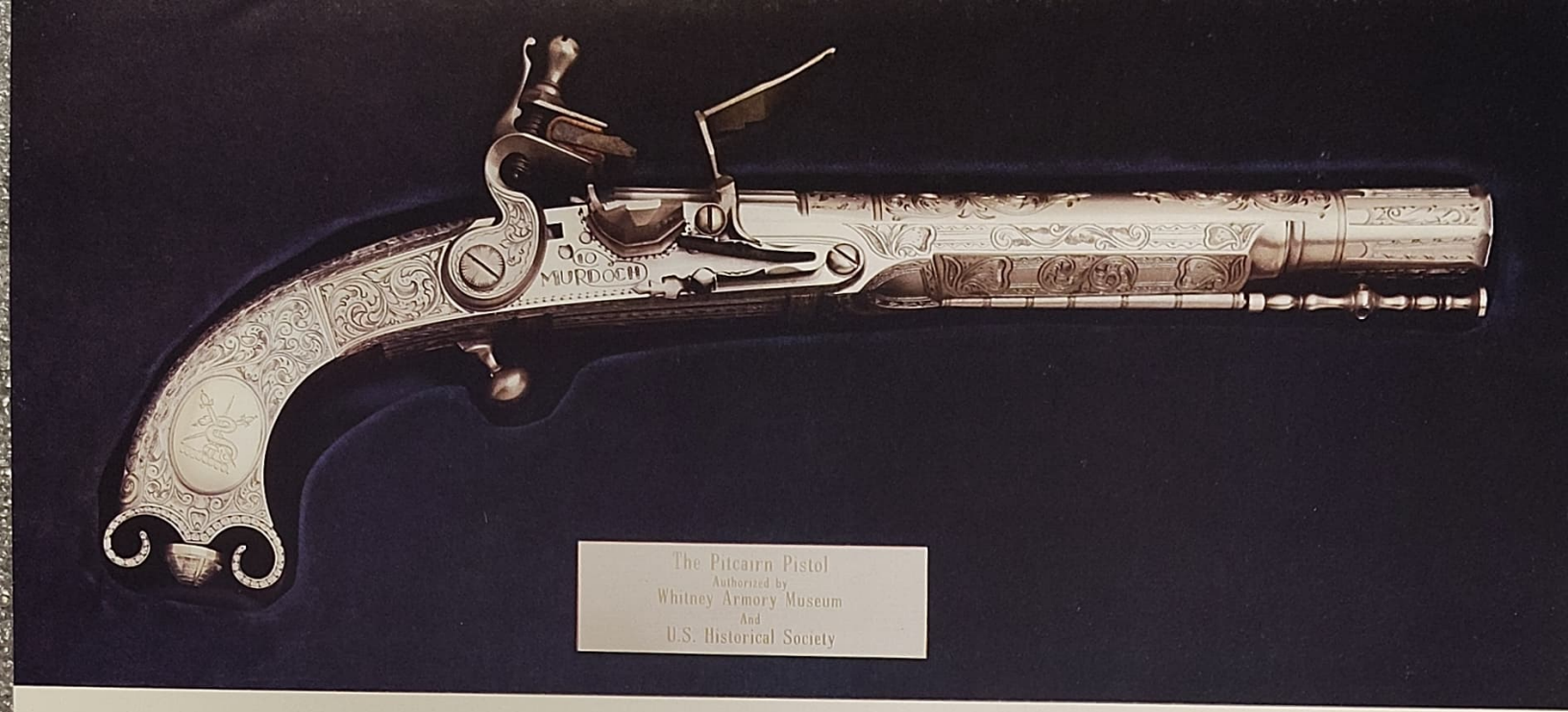
*The Fight on Lexington Common.*/Howard Pyle/Courtesy Delaware Art Museum

# The Pitcairn Pistol

**The Eli Whitney Museum and the United States Historical Society are pleased to inform you of an unprecedented opportunity to obtain the only officially authorized masterpiece replica of the silver-mounted Pitcairn Pistol—which fired the "shot heard 'round the world," at Lexington on the 19th of April, 1775.**




## An Official Offering of the United States Historical Society and the Eli Whitney Museum

The Pitcairn Pistol is offered by the United States Historical Society and the Eli Whitney Museum, with the approval of the Lexington Historical Society which has custody of this national treasure.

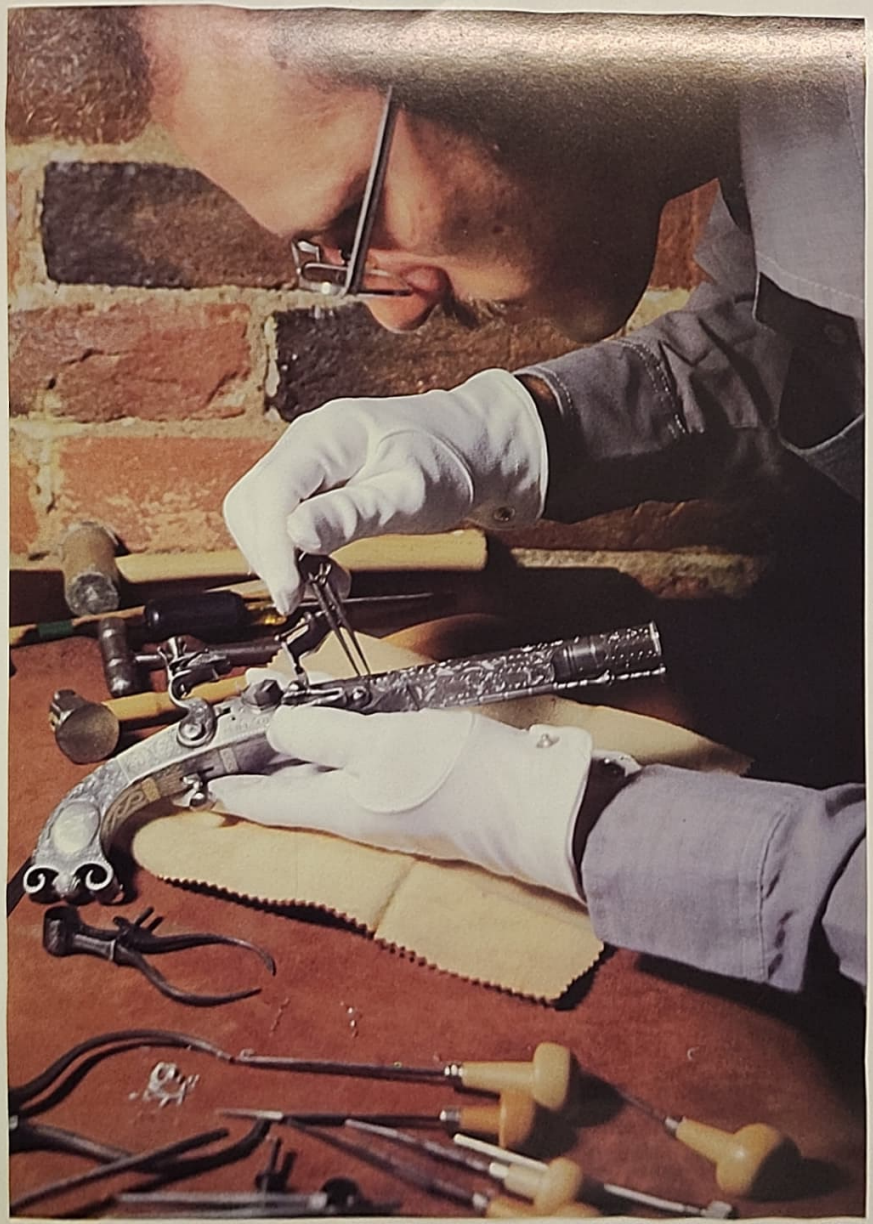
The Pitcairn is an extremely rare combination of fine equipment, workmanship and historic weaponry.

Craddock Goins, Curator of the Division of Military History, Smithsonian Institution, appraises it thusly: *"I have never seen a flintlock replica created with greater skill and attention to detail."*

The Pitcairn issue is limited to 900. Once the edition is complete, the tooling and molds will be destroyed.

Each Pitcairn is individually numbered and registered with the Society.

The Pitcairn comes complete with solid mahogany display case, accompanied by a Certificate of Authenticity and Registration from the United States Historical Society, the Whitney Arms Museum, and the Lexington Historical Society.



## Three Months of Work

The Pitcairn Pistol is literally hand-made. Each is a masterpiece produced by world renowned craftsmen commissioned by the Society Museum. It takes more than three months to produce a single Pitcairn. Each one is *exactly* identical to the original in every respect.

The workbenches of the craftmen will one day make interesting mementos. They bear the imprints of several lifetimes of hard work. Some of the most precious firearms in the world have been restored and replicated here. The benches themselves exist as work in progress. Scars, stains, grooves and file marks continue to accumulate.

Hard by the benches are the ordered rows of the more than 200 tools employed; files of different sizes and shapes, screwdrivers, chisels, knives, pliers and fitting tools. It is uncanny to observe a craftsman simply reach out for a tool from the mass, seize it and continue working without so much as glancing up.

These men hand grind and file each and every piece for a precision fit.

## Distinguished Panel of Antique Arms Experts

**Ken Warner** is a leading authority on guns and knives. An avid collector himself, he is in demand as a consultant, lecturer and writer. Mr. Warner has written two books in the field — *The Practical Book of Guns* and *The Practical Book of Knives* — and hundreds of articles. He is a former Director of Publications for the National Rifle Association and presently serves as editor-in-chief of *The Gun Digest, Handloader's Digest, Cartridges of the World,* and *Knives '87,* an annual publication. He has owned approximately 4,000 guns in his lifetime and is an authority on nearly all makes and models.

**R.L. Wilson,** a fellow of the company of Military Historians, is an historian, author, and consultant to museums, private collectors, dealers, publishers and industry. He has authored more than 15 volumes on firearms, engraving and antique weapons. His latest book is *The American Deringer Pistol.*

**Leonid Tarassuk** is the former Curator of the

*(above) Master engraver carefully cuts the intricate pattern in the steel. (left) Sterling silver inlay bears the engraved family crest of Major John S. Pitcairn. (below) Top view of pistol shows engraved barrel, frizzen and belt hook.*

## Specifications

Overall length, 12 inches; barrel length, 7½ inches; weight, 1½ pounds, including silver; bore, .60 caliber (20 gauge). Material, steel and silver; ball trigger, pricker (touch hole cleaner), steel with sterling cone cap. Belt hook, incised and engraved cut-out steel. Ignition system, miquelet and horizontal (rocking) sear activating cock and releasing flint against steel frizzen. Decoration, silver and steel.

*(above) Note engraving detail of hammer and maker's name, Murdoch, on frame. (right) Silver inlay commemorates the Battle of Lexington.*

politan Museum of Art.

**S. James Gooding** is Director of Museum Restoration Service, Ottawa, Canada.

**Craddock Goins** is the former Curator of the Division of Military History at the Smithsonian Institution.

**Jeff Belcher** is the Chief Gunsmith of the Williamsburg Firearms Manufactory.

One wonders at the patience required. For yet more filing, grinding and polishing is necessary not only to make each fit as precisely as human hands can make them, but so the *relationship* between each piece is perfect.

At last it is time to check the lock mechanism of the piece. It must have the right feel, the correct tension, and the right *sound* or it is mercilessly rejected.

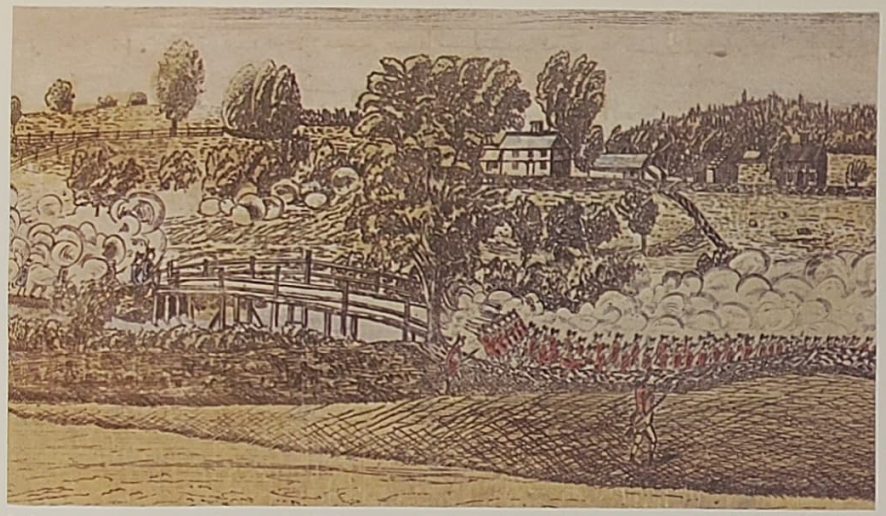
This is an exasperatingly difficult process but again the standards are simple. Perfection or destruction.

After the inlays are fitted, the Pitcairn is carefully hand engraved.

Not just one engraving, mind you. Engraving around the barrels, on the lock plate, the grip tangs, the frame and the thumbplate is required. If one curlicue is not identical to the original, the reproduction is rejected.

Each Pitcairn Pistol is not only beautiful, but proven to be fully functional as well. (The proof marks on the underside of each barrel attest that this firing has met with success.) Afterwards, the residue of the black firing powder is cleaned away, and the pistols are given a light coat of oil for protection.

The Pitcairn Pistol is delivered with complete loading and firing instructions. The Pitcairn is classified as a muzzle-loading antique reproduction. Since flintlocks require a complicated loading procedure, there is no danger of accidental discharge.



*Revolutionary War engraving by Amos Doolittle portrays the engagement at the North Bridge in Concord.*
Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

*Painting by John Trumbull shows Major Pitcairn mortally wounded at the Battle of Bunker Hill. He is supported by his son, Lieutenant Thomas Pitcairn.* Courtesy Wadsworth Atheneum

## The Shot Heard 'Round the World

Date: April 19, 1775. Place: The Common of Lexington, Massachusetts.
Paul Revere himself heard the pistol shot. It was distinctly different in sound from the deep-throated rumble of a musket.

As you no doubt recall, the trouble started at Lexington when the British forces sent to confiscate military stores at Concord were confronted by a ragged line of Minutemen. Although no one knew it at the time, the ensuing bloody skirmish on that Village Green was the real moment of the birth of our nation.

Major John Pitcairn, Commander of the advanced detachment of English raiders, tried to avoid a fight at Lexington — his objective was Concord. But suddenly a Minuteman's musket accidentally "flashed in the pan." Instinctively, Pitcairn wheeled and fired his pistol.

With that shot, the War of Independence began and the pistol that fired it became a legend in one of the most precious moments in American history.

## Pitcairn, Putnum and Burr

The Battle of Concord escalated into a running series of skirmishes along the twenty miles of road back to Boston. In one ambush, Major Pitcairn's horse was creased by a musket ball, bolted, unseating Major Pitcairn, and galloped into the provincial lines. The horse was seized and with it Pitcairn's pistol, still encased in its holster. It was presented to General Israel Putnam, who was George Washington's second-in-command and the Commander of the Connecticut Foot Guards and other units which fought at Bunker Hill. Later, Aaron Burr, Adjutant to "Old Put," verified it as *the Pitcairn Pistol.*

## Reservations

Reservations are now being accepted for the Pitcairn Pistols. Applications should be sent with a deposit of $350 to the U.S. Historical Society. Please allow approximately three months for the crafting and engraving of the pistol. If you are not fully satisfied, you may return the pistol in original condition within 30 days and receive a full refund.

One of the pistols will be on display at the Eli Whitney Museum, and one will be on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution.

## Antique Arms Committee

**Lt. General Richard M. Montgomery**
USAF (Ret.)

**Jerry Rakusan**
Editorial Director
Guns Magazine

**Jeffery Belcher**
Chief Gunsmith
Williamsburg Firearms Manufactory

**Les Line**
Editor
Audubon Magazine

**Ken Warner**
Editor
The Gun Digest

**Michael Korda**
Editor-in-Chief
Simon & Schuster

**Mel Tormé**
Composer/Artist

United States Historical Society™

First and Main Streets
Richmond, Virginia 23219

"The Pitcairn Pistol" and the entire contents of this descriptive brochure are the copyrighted property of the United States Historical Society. ©1987 USHS